

# **MICHIGAN OPTOMETRY LICENSING GUIDE**

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## **1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN**

### **OVERVIEW**

This guide details what a foreign-educated optometrist must do to become eligible for licensing as an optometrist in Michigan. At the same time, it includes some background and tips on the larger optometry profession to give you an idea of the variety of opportunities available as you work to build your career.

### **REGULATION OF OPTOMETRIST IN MICHIGAN**

The practice of optometry in Michigan is regulated by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) on behalf of the Michigan Board of Optometry. You must hold a Michigan license in order to practice as an optometrist in Michigan. LARA issues Michigan licenses to first time licensees and to optometrists who are eligible to practice in other states (by endorsement).

The National Board of Examiners in Optometry ([NBEO](#)) has three exams ([Part I](#), [Part II](#) & [Part III](#)) that serve as the qualifying examinations for a Michigan optometrist license. However, this is the last step in a longer process of education and experience international optometrist must complete to practice in Michigan.

This guide assumes you are an international optometrist who is beginning to build your career in the U.S. This guide will include steps that come before the final state licensing process including education and examinations.

## **2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING**

This section explains important steps you must complete before you can be licensed as an optometrist in Michigan.

## STEPS FOR MICHIGAN LICENSURE

- I. Complete and submit the application for optometrist licensure with the appropriate fee(s) and arrange for supporting documents to be sent to the Michigan Board of Optometry. The State of Michigan optometrist licensure fee is \$170.00. Optometrist may also need Diagnostic Pharmaceutical Agents (DPA) Certification, Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agents (TPA) Certification and a Controlled Substance (CS) license that are \$75.00 each to apply for.
- II. Applicants for optometry licensure in Michigan are required to undergo a Criminal Background Check (CBC) and provide evidence of fingerprint processing from an authorized agency. Fingerprints must be taken using the Customer ID number and instructions provided in the Application Confirmation letter that will be sent when your license application and fee are processed. Do not have your fingerprints taken prior to receiving your Customer ID number.
- III. Arrange for final, official transcripts from your optometry school that shows your doctor of optometry degree and the date it was conferred. The transcript must be submitted directly to the Board office from your school.
- IV. Pass Parts I, II and III of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) examination. Michigan accepts the same overall passing scores that are established by the NBEO. Request NBEO to send your examination scores directly to the State of Michigan.
- V. All applicants for optometry licensure must take and pass the 32-question jurisprudence examination. The passing score on the exam is 75% (24/32). The jurisprudence examination is included in the [application packet](#) and must be completed and returned with your application and fee(s).

## DPA & TPA CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- I. A copy of your current certificate showing successful completion of a course in advanced cardiac life support or a course in basic life support.
- II. The completed Management and Emergency Plan form. Be sure to make a photocopy of this form to keep permanently in your office. Submit the original, signed plan with the application.
- III. The Verification of Diagnostic Pharmaceutical Agents (DPA) Training Form. Section I of the form must be completed and returned to this office by the Director of the DPA educational program or the Registrar of the institution where the training was completed.
- IV. The Verification of Therapeutic Pharmaceutical Agents (TPA) Training Form. Section I of the form must be completed and returned to this office by the Director of the TPA educational program or the Registrar of the institution where the training was completed. You must have DPA Certification to obtain TPA Certification.

### 3. TESTS

All applicants for optometrist licensure must take and pass Parts I, II and III of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) examination.

Applicants for the examinations can apply [online](#). There is an interactive application form included as part of the National Board's web site. You must pay your fees by credit card to use the online application form. If you are registered to take an exam at one of the Pearson VUE test centers and are unable to review your registration on the NBEO website, please visit [Pearson VUE](#) to confirm your registration and seat selection.

Go to NBEO's [Exam Schedule](#) to see the most current exam schedule. Part I & II exam fees are \$725 each and Part III is currently \$625. Exam fees are subject to change and you can visit NBEO's [Exam Fees](#) for the most current list.

#### PART I

The Part I examination, entitled "Applied Basic Science" (ABS), tests the underlying basic science knowledge necessary to enter the clinical practice of optometry. ABS consists of a blend of items from the old Basic Science exam (i.e., items of the type used on the 2008 and earlier Basic Science exams), and items on the old Clinical Science exam (i.e., items of the type used on the April 2009 and earlier Clinical Science exams). Most ABS items reference a clinical condition, either explicitly or implicitly. There are a total of 500 items on the ABS examination. The exam is four sessions in length, each session 3½ hours long and containing 125 items.

Student candidates must be in the spring of their third academic year to take the ABS exam. There will be three opportunities to sit for the exam prior to graduation

#### PART II

The Part II Patient Assessment and Management (PAM) examination is administered in a computer-based testing (CBT) format. The NBEO has contracted with Pearson VUE for computerized testing services. Pearson VUE's extensive network of more than 200 test centers provides relatively easy access for all candidates to sit for the exam.

The PAM examination is administered in a single day. The December administration of PAM will be offered on two dates, but each candidate will take the exam on a single day. Different versions of the PAM exam will be given on each of the two days, but they will be equivalent in content and difficulty level. The April administration will continue to be offered on a single day.

The PAM exam is comprised of two sessions on a single day. Each session consists of approximately 175 items. The PAM exam is composed of Full Cases, Solo Items, and Minicases. Candidates are given 3 1/2 hours to complete each session. The morning session includes an additional 15 minutes (for a total time of 3 3/4 hours) which is devoted to a tutorial (similar to the tutorial posted on this website) and the reading and signing of a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). There is an optional break of up to 45 minutes between the morning and afternoon sessions.

### PART III

The NBEO Part III Clinical Skills Evaluation (CSE) is a distinctive clinical skills examination for optometry requiring fundamental skills that reflect actual practice. Our state-of-the-art testing facility exam rooms simulate real-life optometric examination rooms and allow the NBEO to provide the safety, security, and standardization necessary to ensure fairness and validity in a high-stakes testing environment. The NBEO office staff and members of the Board of Directors extend to you best wishes for a safe, pleasant trip to the NCCTO in Charlotte, North Carolina and for success on your Part III Clinical Skills Examination.

## **4. TIME AND COSTS**

Optometrist licensure in Michigan depends on many factors including:

- The completeness of your educational and professional records
- Your performance on the NBEO examinations
- The completeness of your application for Michigan licensure.

Two sample scenarios below show some outcomes that foreign professionals may experience when they seek an optometrist license in Michigan. Please do not consider them as minimum or maximum scenarios, only as two reference points out of many. Your experience will vary.

### TWO HYPOTHETICAL SCENARIOS FOR OPTOMETRIST LICENSING

Step	More Efficient Scenario (Approximate Cost & Time)	Less Efficient Scenario (Approximate Cost & Time)
1 Educational Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of your foreign degree qualifies you immediately for the NBEO Examinations. Your foreign credentials are well-organized and in English. You complete all program requirements,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems with your documentation takes 2 years to resolve and adds costs. Increased costs include visitation to your educational institute for evaluation and translating documentation.</li> </ul>

Step	More Efficient Scenario (Approximate Cost & Time)	Less Efficient Scenario (Approximate Cost & Time)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>including degree evaluation and are made eligible for the examination.</li> <li>\$800 &amp; 1 year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$1,500 &amp; 2 years</li> </ul>
2 Part I, II & III Exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You apply online for each exam and you pass each exam on your first attempt.</li> <li>\$2,075 &amp; 1 year and 3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You apply online for each exam and fail each exam on your first attempt. You reapply for each exam online and pass each exam on your second attempt.</li> <li>\$2,075 + \$2,075 &amp; 2 years</li> </ul>
3 Optometrist License by Exam Application + CBC + DPA + TPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your application is completed and supporting documentation is in order. You undergo the Criminal Background Check immediately after receiving instructions to do so. You also apply for DPA and TPA certification with correct support documentation.</li> <li>\$170 + \$65 + \$75 + \$75 &amp; 3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your application is incomplete and supporting documentation is not in order. You wait to undergo the Criminal Background Check. You also didn't submit required documentation for DPA and TPA certification.</li> <li>\$170 + \$65 + \$75 + \$75 &amp; 6 months</li> </ul>
•	<b>More Efficient Total</b> <b>\$3,260 &amp; 2½ Years</b>	<b>Less Efficient Total</b> <b>\$2,900 &amp; 4½ Years</b>

## 5. OTHER CAREERS AND CREDENTIALS

### OPTICIAN

Opticians are not licensed in Michigan and employers retain sole expectations of experience and function. Opticians generally fit and dispense corrective lenses for impaired vision. Many employers elect to arrange for new opticians to be trained by experienced opticians who currently practice. Opticians who work for large optical businesses may find that they are only trained in retail sales and minor frame adjustments. An optician who desires a more comprehensive understanding of the industry should voluntarily complete the certification exams offered by the [American Board of Opticianry \(ABO\)](#) and the [National Contact Lens Examiners](#)

[\(NCLE\)](#). These certifications can impact your pay and opportunities for advancement in the industry.

## HEALTHCARE INTERPRETER

If you are bilingual and a strong communicator, you may want to research opportunities for work in hospitals as an interpreter. This type of role is not regulated in Michigan, so standards for employment as well as pay and benefits may be very different depending on the employer. You are more likely to have benefits such as tuition reimbursement if you find work as a direct employee of a healthcare facility instead of working for a company that provides interpretation services to hospitals. You may want to begin your research by directly contacting human resource departments at hospitals.

## **6. BEYOND LICENSING**

### MAINTAINING LICENSURE

Your initial optometrist license is only good until the next expiration date of your profession. After your first renewal, your license will be valid for 2 years. You will receive a renewal application 45-60 days prior to the expiration date of your license. Optometrist licenses expire on June 30, every 2 years and the renewal fee is \$190.

You cannot renew your license early. Our system is not set up to receive renewal information until the renewal time for your profession. We will mail you renewal information approximately 45-60 days before the expiration date of your current license. It is your responsibility to renew your license on time. Failure to notify us of an address change does not exempt you from renewing your license on time. You can complete an address change and renew online at [www.michigan.gov/elicense](http://www.michigan.gov/elicense). Online renewal payments require you to pay with a credit card.

The law requires that you must complete mandatory continuing education prior to renewal of your license. Submission of your renewal application is an indication that you have completed the mandatory continuing education in board approved activities. If you have not done so, please complete your continuing education before you submit your renewal.

We audit a percentage of each profession and request the licensee to document the continuing education that they completed. If you cannot provide the documentation or if you did not complete the required continuing education, an administrative complaint will be filed against your license for failure to comply with the requirements of the Public Health Code. The complaint will result in disciplinary action which can include a fine, completion of additional continuing education and

probation. This will be a permanent record on your license and will be reported to Federal databanks as required by law and other states will have access to that information.

Additional information on continuing education requirements for optometrist in Michigan can be found in the [Michigan Public Health Code](#).

## LICENSING MOBILITY (RECIPROCITY)

The State of Michigan grants licensing to optometrists either by examination (the process described in this guide) or by endorsement. An optometrist licensed in another state who wants to practice in Michigan must independently meet all Michigan requirements for licensing. If you become licensed in Michigan and want to practice optometry in another state, you will need to research the legal requirements for that state.

## **7. IMPORTANT LINKS**

### LICENSING & REGULATION

- State of Michigan [Optometrist Application](#)
- The Michigan Department of [LARA](#)
- Bureau of Professional Licensing ([BPL](#))
- [Licensing Division Website](#)
- [Michigan Board of Optometry Website](#)
- [Michigan Public Health Code](#) Regulating Optometry
- [Michigan Administrative Code](#) Regulating Optometry
- Michigan Public Health Code Regulating [Controlled Substances](#)
- Michigan Administrative Code Regulating [Controlled Substances](#)
- [Application Status](#)
- [License Verification](#)
- [Renewal Website](#)

### Contact Information:

Bureau of Professional Licensing  
PO Box 30670  
Lansing, MI 48909

Telephone: 517-241-0650  
Fax: 517-335-2044  
Email: [bplhelp@michigan.gov](mailto:bplhelp@michigan.gov)

## CREDENTIALING ORGANIZATIONS

- National Board of Examiners in Optometry ([NBEO](#))
- Test of English as a Foreign Language ([TOEFL](#))

## TESTING

- NBEO [Part I](#) Examination
- NBEO [Part II](#) Examination
- NBEO [Part III](#) Examination